



Bi-Weekly Drought Brief

Wednesday, January 21, 2015

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Recent Precipitation: Very little rain or snow has fallen since the winter storms in early December. Over the past two weeks, only a small amount of rain has fallen, mostly in far northern California - 0.5 inches.

Below are precipitation totals (in inches) from Monday, January 5 through Tuesday, January 20, and year-to-date rainfall based on the water year cycle (October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015).

- **Bakersfield:** 0.00" (2.50")
- **Folsom Dam:** 0.00" (11.73")
- **Fresno:** 0.00" (3.19")
- **Hetch Hetchy:** 0.00" (8.68")
- **Los Angeles:** 0.00" (5.60")
- **Modesto:** 0.00" (7.40")
- **Oroville:** 0.04" (19.24")
- **Pacific House:** 0.00" (14.60")
- **Redding:** 0.60" (22.48")
- **Riverside:** 0.00" (2.50")
- **Sacramento:** 0.02" (9.32")
- **San Diego:** 0.37" (5.14")
- **Shasta Dam:** 0.96" (35.32")
- **Willits:** 1.20" (27.64")

While the December storms provided a meaningful uptick in many of the state's reservoirs the lack of precipitation since those storms means that California remains firmly in a drought. California's extreme drought conditions have evolved over several years of rainfall deficits. Refilling reservoirs and rebuilding the snowpack will require a series of additional, colder storms through January, February, and March, and recharging underground aquifers will need even more precipitation and time. It is very important for Californians to continue conserving water and follow drought-related directives from water agencies.

Precipitation Forecast: A recent storm that brought rain to the far north of the state has passed and is replaced by a ridge of high pressure, which means dry conditions are expected in the week ahead. The latest forecast out to the end of January suggests the possibility of light rains in limited areas of the state.

El Niño Predictions and Weather Outlook: The National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center indicates a 50-60% probability that El Niño conditions will develop during the next two months, which is roughly the same probability as previous reports. However, prediction suggests that if El Niño develops this winter, it will be a **weak El Niño event** which has little historical correlation to increased rain and snow.

Snow Survey: The most recent [snowpack survey](#), conducted on December 30, recorded California snowpack at 33% of normal. A more [recent update](#) using automated devices shows snowpack at 31% of normal as of January 20.

Reservoir Levels (% capacity): Reservoir storages of major California reservoirs have flattened out in the past two weeks due to lack of storms to generate inflows. Any gains in storage at these reservoirs over this period have been minor, mainly due to limited continued runoff from the storms back in early December.

[Reservoir Levels](#) as of January 19 remain low, including: Don Pedro 40% of capacity (59% of year to date average); Exchequer 7% of capacity (14% of average); Folsom Lake 46% of capacity (90% of average); Lake Oroville 40% of capacity (62% of average); Millerton Lake 35% of capacity (59% of average); New Melones 23% of capacity (40% of average); Pine Flat 13% of capacity (29% of average); San Luis 49% of capacity (66% of average); Lake Shasta 43% of capacity (66% of average); and Trinity Lake 35% of capacity (50% of average). An update of water levels at [other smaller reservoirs](#) is also available.

Fire Activity: In 2014, CAL FIRE responded to almost 1,000 more wildfires than the 5-year average. Since the beginning of the year, CAL FIRE has responded to over 30 wildfires across the state. CAL FIRE continues to monitor the drought situation and prepare for the wildfire season ahead while maintaining staffing that meets the current threat. Should the need arise, CAL FIRE is positioned to augment staffing as required.

Statewide Open Burn Ban Update: CAL FIRE has lifted the outdoor burn bans across all 56 counties within the State Responsible Areas (SRA). Many counties still require permits, and daily fire and weather conditions will continue to dictate whether burning is permissible on any given day. The [burn ban](#), issued last July, prohibits certain outdoor burning in the SRA.

Vulnerable Water Systems: The State Water Board's [Drinking Water Program](#) continues to provide technical and funding assistance to several communities facing drinking water shortages and is monitoring water systems across the state to determine if new support is needed. As of this week, a total to date of \$15 million has been identified for specific emergency drinking water projects out of \$15 million appropriated in March 2014 for this purpose.

KEY ACTION ITEMS FROM THIS WEEK

- **Governor Unveils \$113 Billion Budget Proposal, Includes \$532 Million from Water Bond:** On Friday, January 9, Gov. Jerry Brown released the [proposed 2015-16 fiscal year budget](#) during a morning press conference and highlighted the water expenditures saying the state is “spending money on water, flood protection and combatting climate change.” Brown proposed a balanced \$113 billion budget for the upcoming fiscal year that [appropriates \\$532 million](#) from the recently approved water bond to continue the implementation of the Water Action Plan the administration's five-year roadmap towards sustainable water management.
- **DWR Submits CVP and SWP Drought Contingency Plan:** On Thursday, January 15, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) and the U.S Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) submitted the 2015 Drought Operations Contingency Plan to the State Water Board as required by the State Water Board September Water Rights Order. The Plan, which will be discussed at the State Water Board's Board meeting this week, outlines actions that the state and federal water projects will take under a range of precipitation scenarios in the coming months.

In addition, the Board will distribute a Notice of Probable Curtailment to all water rights holders statewide this week. The Notice serves to remind water rights holders that curtailments are likely in many watersheds if conditions remain dry. If significant additional rain and snow does not fall, curtailments are likely to begin within the next several months.

- **NOAA Analysis Shows Near- and Above- Record Rain Needed to Lift Drought:** Despite a welcome boost from moisture-laden storms in early December, California remains firmly in a drought that could last through September 2015, according to a recent analysis by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The early December storms raised monthly rainfall totals to as much as 20 inches in parts of Northern California and allowed the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#) to reduce the areas it considers to be in “extreme” and “exceptional” drought. On January 9, 32% of California was classified as being in “exceptional drought,” down from 55% in the first week of December.
- **DWR Announces Slight Increase in Allocations, Urges Californians to Brace for Fourth Year of Drought:** On Thursday, January 15, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) announced an increase to the expected water deliveries in 2015 to most customers of the State Water Project (SWP) from 10 percent of their requested amounts to [15 percent](#). This slight increase in allocation to DWR contractors results from DWR’s ability to move runoff from December storms into the San Luis Reservoir south of the Delta. While this increase is good news for water users, a 15 percent allocation represents the second lowest water allocation in the history of the State Water Project.
- **State Water Board Reports Improvement in Urban Water Conservation Rates for November:** Against the backdrop of early season rainfall that has delivered only a third of what would be needed to end the prolonged drought, statewide residential water conservation in [November climbed to a 9.8 percent](#) reduction in year-over-year water use. This change was an improvement from the October data, which indicated conservation efforts were slipping, compared to previous months.

Since data collection began in July last year, more than 105 billion gallons of water have been saved compared to last year – enough to supply 1.37 million California residents for a year. For November, most of the state’s hydrologic regions exhibited the best water conservation numbers since data reporting began.

- **Emergency Food Aid, Rental and Utility Assistance:** The Department of Social Services (CDSS) has provided to date over 448,600 boxes of food to community food banks in drought-impacted counties. Approximately 392,400 boxes of food have been picked up by 207,538 households. By this Friday, January 23, an additional 12,000 boxes will be delivered to four counties. Local food banks continue to target food aid to residents most impacted by drought.

The non-profit group La Cooperativa continues to distribute the \$10 million state-funded emergency rental assistance to impacted families and individuals across counties most impacted by the drought. As of Thursday, January 8, the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) has reported that a total of \$8,438,392 is committed; and \$7,004,044 in funds has been issued to 4,382 applicants in 21 counties.

The Department of Community Services and Development (CSD) has created a \$600,000 program to help families pay their water bills. This program targets families through 10 agencies that are experiencing “exceptional” drought. As of Friday, January 9, CSD has reported that a total of \$511,372 has been issued to 2,793 households.

CSD has also implemented a \$400,000 Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker (MSFW) drought assistance program, in coordination with the California Human Development (CHD), Central Valley Opportunity Center (CVOC), Center for Employment Training (CET) and Proteus, which provides assistance in employment training and placement services to individuals impacted by the drought. As of Friday, January 9, 128 clients are enrolled in employment training programs, 23 clients have obtained employment, and 128 clients are receiving employment support services. CSD has also reported that a total of \$316,652 has been spent to assist participants in completing training employment programs.

- **Water Saving Tips Promoted Across the State:** Californians made strides in 2014 to save water during one of the worst droughts in generations. For 2015, SaveOurWater.com urges Californians to make a New Year’s resolution to save water daily as a permanent lifestyle change. Save Our Water’s newly revamped website makes it even easier for Californians to learn how to save water indoors, outdoors, and at work. The website features the theme “Conservation: California’s Year-Round Resolution.” Visitors can sign up for daily email tips and grow the public awareness campaign by sharing Save Our Water [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) feeds.
- **Drought Response Funding:** The \$687 million in state drought funding that was appropriated last March through emergency legislation, as well as \$142 million provided in the 2014 Budget Act, continues to advance toward meeting critical needs. To date, \$227 million has been expended, and nearly \$625 million of the emergency funds appropriated in March came from sources dedicated to capital improvements to water systems. Since March, the Department of Water Resources has expedited grant approvals, getting \$21 million immediately allocated to grantees that were pre-approved for certain projects. As planned in March, the next \$200 million of expedited capital funding was awarded in October, and the remaining \$250 million will be granted by fall 2015. The 2014 Budget Act appropriated an additional \$53.8 million to CAL FIRE over its typical budget to enhance firefighter surge capacity and retain seasonal firefighters beyond the typical fire season. In the event drought conditions continue through next year, the proposed 2015-16 Governor’s Budget includes an additional \$115 million to continue critical drought response efforts.
- **Governor’s Drought Task Force:** The Task Force continues to take actions that conserve water and coordinate state response to the drought.

Local Government

- **Local Emergency Proclamations:** A total of 60 local Emergency Proclamations have been received to date from city, county, and tribal governments, as well as special districts:
 - **25 Counties:** Glenn, Inyo, Humboldt, Kern, Kings, Lake, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, Modoc, Napa, Plumas, Santa Barbara, San Bernardino, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, Shasta, Siskiyou, Sonoma, Sutter, Trinity, Tulare, Tuolumne, Yuba, and El Dorado.

- **13 Cities:** City of Willits (Mendocino County), City of St. Helena (Napa County), City of Calistoga (Napa County), City of American Canyon (Napa County), City of Santa Barbara (Santa Barbara County), City of Montague (Siskiyou County), City of Live Oak (Sutter County), City of San Juan Bautista (San Benito County), City of Lodi (San Joaquin County), City of Portola (Plumas County), City of Ripon (San Joaquin County), City of Rio Dell (Humboldt County), and City of West Sacramento (Yolo County).
- **9 Tribes:** Hoopa Valley Tribe (Humboldt County), Yurok Tribe (Humboldt County), Tule River Indian Tribe (Tulare County), Karuk Tribe (Siskiyou/Humboldt Counties), Sherwood Valley Pomo Indian Tribe (Mendocino County), Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation (Yolo County), Cortina Indian Rancheria (Colusa County), Kashia Band of Pomo Indians of the Stewarts Point Rancheria (Sonoma County), and Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi Indians (Madera County).
- **13 Special Districts:** Brooktrails Township (Mendocino County), Lake Don Pedro Community Services District (Stanislaus County), Placer County Water Agency (Placer County), Twain Harte Community Services District (Tuolumne County), Carpinteria Valley Water District (Santa Barbara County), Meiners Oaks Water District (Ventura County), Mariposa Public Utility District (Mariposa County), Goleta Water District (Santa Barbara County), Montecito Water District (Santa Barbara County), Tuolumne Utilities District (Tuolumne County), Mountain House Community Service District (San Joaquin County), Nevada Irrigation District (Nevada County), and Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District (Los Angeles County).
- **Water Agency Conservation Efforts:** The Association of California Water Agencies (AWCA) [has identified](#) several hundred local water agencies that have implemented water conservation actions. These water agencies [are responding to the drought](#) by implementing conservation programs, which include voluntary calls for reduced water usage and mandatory restrictions where water shortages are worst.
- **County Drought Taskforces:** A total of 30 counties have established drought task forces to coordinate local drought response. These counties include: Butte, Glenn, Humboldt, Imperial, Kern, Kings, Lake, Madera, Mendocino, Merced, Modoc, Monterey, Napa, Nevada, Orange, Placer, Plumas, Sacramento, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Siskiyou, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tehama, Tulare, Tuolumne, and Yolo.
- **Tribal Taskforce:** A total of 3 tribes have established drought task forces to coordinate tribal drought response. These tribes include: Hoopa Valley Tribe (Humboldt County), Yurok Tribe (Humboldt Counties) and Sherwood Valley Tribe (Mendocino County).

DROUGHT RELATED WEBSITES FOR MORE INFORMATION

[Drought.CA.Gov](#): California's Drought Information Clearinghouse

State's Water Conservation Campaign, [Save our Water](#)
Local Government, [Drought Clearinghouse and Toolkit](#)

California Department of Food and Agriculture, [Drought information](#)
California Department of Water Resources, [Current Water Conditions](#)
California Data Exchange Center, [Snow Pack/Water Levels](#)
California State Water Resources Control Board, Water Rights, [Drought Info and Actions](#)
California Natural Resources Agency, [Drought Info and Actions](#)
State Water Resources Control Board, Drinking Water, [SWRCB Drinking Water Program](#)
California State Water Project, [Information](#)

[U.S. Drought Monitor](#) for Current Conditions throughout the Region
[U.S. Drought Portal](#), National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS)
National Weather Service [Climate Predictor Center](#)
USDA Drought Designations by County [CA County Designations](#)
USDA Disaster and Drought Assistance Information [USDA Programs](#)
U.S. Small Business Administration Disaster Assistance Office: www.sba.gov/disaster